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COUNTRY Indochina (Viet Nam)

SUBJECT Possibilities of Native Resistance to Communists

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1. It would be very difficult to describe the bitterness felt by Vietnamese over their betrayal by the French who are turning large sections of the country over to the Communists with no defense.
2. The feeling among the people is intensified because the provinces being evacuated by the French are about 90% Roman Catholic and the most bitterly anti-Communist areas in the entire country. This situation is particularly ironic because the French entered Indochina in 1859 ostensibly to "protect missionaries" and in recent years the French have told troops going to Indochina that their purpose is to "protect freedom, liberty, and Catholicism."
3. There are well over one million Roman Catholics in north Viet Nam and a total of over two million out of a total population of 20 million in Viet Nam.
4. These people offer the best possibilities of resistance to the Communists. The fact that many have been anti-French is no indication that they are not equally anti-Communist. If they were supplied with arms and other military assistance by the US, I believe they would be able to put up an extremely fine defense against the Communists.
5. In this connection I believe that at least 80% of the members of the Viet Minh armed forces are nationalists rather than Communists. The US could achieve tremendous popular support in Viet Nam if it issued a firm promise that the independence of Viet Nam extended by France will not be just a scrap of paper and offered to supply direct assistance to Vietnamese willing to fight the Communists.
6. Conversely, if the US came into the war without a strong declaration of its desire to help Viet Nam achieve full independence, it would be misunderstood and resented by the Vietnamese people.
7. The Vietnamese would be greatly heartened by having the US train Vietnamese troops to develop a strong national army, something which France has never wanted.

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8. Only a few zealous Communists, actually not more than a handful in the entire country, want to see partition of the country and the US could incur great good will by coming out strongly against partition of Viet Nam.
9. In addition, to the bitter anti-French sentiment among the Vietnamese people, for generations the Vietnamese have also hated the Chinese. They have always felt that they have been exploited by the Chinese, who have controlled whole-sale and retail distribution outlets. Even the Viet Minh troops could be affected by anti-Chinese propaganda along this line.
10. The strong anti-Communist position of the Roman Catholic Church is evidenced by the Catholic militia in North Viet Nam, which has given a very good account of itself in a number of skirmishes with Communists.
11. One Catholic militia group is under Bishop PHAM Ngoc Chi, bishop of the diocese of Bui-Chu, near Phat Diem. Bishop Chi is very pro-US. He was educated in Rome and subsequently in France at the Catholic Institute of Paris. He visited the US in 1950 with NGO Dinh Diem, the recently selected premier of Viet Nam.
12. Bishop Chi is not a political leader and he definitely does not want to mix religion and politics, but he feels strongly that he must defend his country against the Communists.
13. Bishop LE Huu Tu likewise organized his own militia in 1945 and successfully defended a large area around Phat Diem against the Communists until he turned his troops over to Bao Dai.
14. In 1951 all of the bishops in Indochina held a meeting in Hanoi and issued a letter to the Catholics of Indochina warning them on the dangers of Communism. The Catholics were told that in conscience they must not give any support to the Communist Party which would enable it to achieve power. In retaliation the Communists murdered five priests and many Catholic laymen.
15. There are 1,555 native Vietnamese priests and several native Vietnamese bishops. Most of the native clergy are anti-French, but all are anti-Communists.
16. The possibilities of resistance to Communism are greater in Viet Nam than in other of the associated states in Indochina. Cambodia, with a population of four million, is a Buddhist country, almost a theocracy. Buddhists have no religious aversion to Communism as such, but where independence is concerned the country would come first. I think that Cambodia could likewise be rallied to defense of the country against the Communists if it were promised complete independence from the French.
17. The same situation applies to Laos with its population of one million, although there has never been as strong a feeling for independence in Laos as in the other states.
18. The fundamental key to the whole problem of establishing active and effective resistance to the Communists in Indochina is full and complete independence of all of Indochina from French colonialism.
19. Next in importance is the necessity of putting the country in the right hands as far as leadership is concerned, with no play boy or Francophile leaders arbitrarily put at the head of government.

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